



## City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

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Barbara Wilson,  
Executive Director  
Scott Dvorak,  
Analyst  
Robin Magonegil,  
Admin Assistant

May 27, 2005

Honorable Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck  
Chair, Urban Development and Planning Committee  
Seattle City Council - Seattle City Hall  
PO Box 34025  
Seattle, WA 98124-4025

Dear Councilmember Steinbrueck,

The Seattle Planning Commission (SPC) is pleased to share with you its comments and recommendation on the Mayor's proposed *Neighborhood Business District Strategy and Land Use Code Amendments* dated April 7, 2005. The Commission supports the notion of simplification and reform of the commercial code as a way to bolster thriving neighborhood business districts that are crucial for communities. The Commission recognizes the important role that neighborhood commercial areas play in providing goods and services to the community. Neighborhood business districts enrich the fabric and vitality of our neighborhoods, making them active lively community places while reducing the need for residents to drive long distances to goods and services.

During the past four months the Commission has engaged in a productive dialog with the Director and staff of DPD, with the result that most of our earlier concerns have been satisfactorily addressed. Attached are detailed comments on the major elements of the Mayor's proposal, together with certain recommendations.

Overall, the Commission supports the Mayor's proposal. We appreciate the substantial progress made toward code simplification. We strongly support the change to the FAR method of regulating building bulk and the elimination residential density limits in the commercial zones, and recommend adoption of these changes. We do not support requiring more than one entry to a residential building and recommend that that element of the proposal not be adopted.

Two major areas of concern remain:

- The Commission generally supports the reduction in parking quantity requirements in commercial zones, as well as changes in development regulations governing location of and access to parking. However, the proposed changes may need to be refined to meet the needs of specific communities.
- The Commission is very concerned that only six neighborhoods have been mapped for the P designation, and that DPD intends to complete the mapping in the future. This raises the possibility that residential uses at street level could vest in certain areas where future mapping may show such a change to be inappropriate. We

believe that the mapping of the areas where ground floor retail is required is critical to the success of this proposal. If insufficient commercial areas are allocated in our intensifying residential neighborhoods, the effect could be a decrease in livability, an increased dependence on the automobile to obtain basic services, and a gradual loss of small businesses and associated services (such as professional offices, workshops, small institutions, schools, and the like) from the city. We note that the current development economics do not guarantee that sufficient commercial space will be built to satisfy the needs of the growing population that the encouraged residential development will produce. Additionally there are some areas that should retain the requirement for ground floor commercial uses that may be outside the P designations. While increasing the pedestrian orientation is one objective of requiring ground floor commercial uses, it is equally important that sufficient commercial space is available to meet residential and business needs. Some of that space need not be in a pedestrian overlay that carries specific requirements. The Commission recommends that adequate resources be made available to DPD to complete the mapping concurrent with the code amendments or at least by the end of this year.

City staff are to be commended for their hard work and dedicated effort to achieve the worthy goals and objectives of this effort. The Commission recommends adoption of the proposal, with modifications, and is ready and willing to assisting where possible with implementing the strategy. Please feel free to contact the Commission for clarification on any of these points through our Executive Director, Barbara Wilson at (206) 684-0431.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Blomberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

George Blomberg  
Chair

CC:

Greg Nickels, Mayor  
Seattle City Council  
Tim Ceis, Deputy Mayor  
Grace Crunican, SDOT  
Diane Sugimura, DPD  
John Rahaim, DPD  
Susan Sanchez, SDOT  
Mary Jean Ryan, OPM  
John Skelton, DPD  
Jory Phillips, DPD  
Lish Whitson, DPD  
Mary Catherine Snyder, SDOT  
Bob Morgan, Council Central Staff  
Rebecca Herzfeld, Council Central Staff  
Geri Beardsley, Council Central Staff  
Irene Wall, City Neighborhood Council